

Japan's Emergent Security Policy

By PATRICK M. CRONIN



Tokyo's new outpost.

Japanese Defense Agency

Japan, long regarded as America's bedrock ally in the Asia-Pacific region, is in the midst of the most extensive review of defense policy in more than twenty years. The results of this assessment will likely unfold incrementally rather than in one fell swoop. Nonetheless, by the end of the century we should see a new security relationship between Washington and Tokyo, more autonomous Japanese military capabilities, and increased participation on the part of Japan in multilateral security organizations.

At the core of this rethinking is the likely emergence of a National Defense Program Outline in the coming year. Current Japanese defense planning is based upon guidelines outlined in 1976. A special advisory panel was named in early 1994 to restructure the outline to reflect the emerging

global order. The panel delivered a report on "The Modality of the Security and Defense Capability of Japan: The Outlook for the 21st Century" to Prime Minister Tomiichi Murayama in August 1994.¹ The National Defense Program is now under review, with an official version expected by year's end. Even if the advisory report receives a dilatory response, it will survive as a powerful guide for Japanese defense planners. Above all, the report calls for a new comprehensive strategy, arguing that "Japan should extricate itself from its security policy of the past that was, if anything, passive, and henceforth play an active role in shaping a new order." Japan's post-Cold War strategy should rest on heightened multilateral cooperation, continued alliance with America, and well-balanced, ready, and mobile military forces.

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While that three-pronged approach is not new, the emphasis placed on the first and third pillars, as opposed to a predominant reliance on the U.S. security umbrella, represents a discernible shift in strategy.

Recasting Japanese security priorities has obvious implications for the United States, which has a force of some 47,000 personnel in Japan, including the Seventh Fleet flagship in Yokosuka, the Third Marine Expeditionary Force on Okinawa, and more than 100 Air Force combat planes. It is therefore significant that the report reaffirms the centrality of the alliance with the United States in the Japanese security calculus. The report touts the present partnership as an alliance for peace. It notes the essential

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nature of the U.S.-Japan security relations and urges both parties to reassert the alliance's rationale and make systemic improvements to clarify bilateral roles and missions. It encourages building a missile defense system with American collaboration, providing host nation support, and improving combined operations. In addition, it calls for a NATO-style acquisition and cross-servicing agreement, and for bilateral research, development, and production.

Attention to strengthening defense relations with Washington is counterbalanced, however, by an emphasis on multilateral approaches and autonomous capabilities. The agenda is centered on an expanded role in peace operations and regional organizations such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations Regional Forum and the Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia Pacific. The report urges U.S.-centered multilateralism but does not state how alliance roles and missions will be related to the new agenda of the Self-Defense Forces (SDF). Absent a proximate threat the report consistently refers to the opaque and uncertain environment of the post-Cold War era. Potential dangers are listed as disruption in international maritime traffic, invasion of territorial air space, illegal territorial occupation, limited missile attack, terrorism, and armed refugees.

But none of these dangers is viewed as a major mission for the Japanese military. Instead, peacekeeping is clearly the new SDF *raison d'être*. Peacekeeping has been a growing mission ever since the Gulf War tainted Japan's international standing. Despite the fact that Tokyo contributed \$13 billion to the coalition effort to counter Iraqi aggression and belatedly sent minesweepers to the Gulf, Japan appeared unwilling to risk lives for the international community. Peacekeeping received a tremendous boost from successful SDF participation in the U.N. Transitional Authority in Cambodia. Japanese peacekeepers arrived in Mozambique and Rwanda in late 1994 as further deployments to the Middle East and Balkans were being actively considered.

Hence, it is not surprising that the advisory panel pegged many of its recommendations for SDF restructuring on peacekeeping, to include organizing ground units for operations other than war and humanitarian assistance; shifting the focus of the Ground Self-Defense Force (GSDF) from large, slow-moving platforms to highly mobile systems; emphasizing jointness among the services; enhancing intelligence; building long-range transport aircraft; considering midair refueling assets; acquiring maritime support ships for sustainability; and bolstering research and education in foreign languages and international relations expertise. Reflecting in part concern over the ability to respond quickly to the Gulf War or another potential conflict, such as on the Korean peninsula, the report recommends reorganizing, augmenting, and streamlining the Japanese security apparatus in order to be in a position to make a swift and substantial response in time of crisis.

Faced with the prospect of lower defense budgets and downsizing ground forces, Japan is likely to put a premium on heightened jointness. Large and historic barriers must be negotiated, however, if jointness is to provide synergy on tomorrow's battlefield. Prior to World War II the Imperial Army and Navy reported separately to the Emperor without an intermediary to coordinate planning. Interservice rivalry was intense as the army guarded against Russia, the principal land power in the region, and the navy shadowed the United States, the major maritime competitor. So colossal was the



Marine F/A-18,
Japanese F-1, and
Air Force F-16 during
Cope North 94-1.

U.S. Air Force (Lem Robson)

chasm that the navy never informed the army of its critical defeat at Midway while the army privately set out to construct its own submarines.

After the war Japan took some modest steps toward inculcating its residual defense forces with a common culture. An interservice education system was instituted in 1952 with the creation of the National Defense Academy. A Central Procurement Office managed service acquisition and a Joint Staff Council coordinated service plans. Joint exercises provided basic operational training for the GSDF, the Maritime Self-Defense Force (MSDF), and the Air Self-Defense Force (ASDF). But jointness never really developed, not least because of a deliberate policy to constrain military effectiveness. For example, the services face elementary problems in conducting joint operations because of poor or nonexistent means of rapid communication. It is unlikely that Japan will adopt any sweeping reforms such as the Goldwater-Nichols DOD Reorganization Act in the near future.

Peacekeeping deployments to Mozambique and more recently to Rwanda involved both the GSDF and ASDF. Of course, deploying multiservice contingents is far different from employing joint forces in ways that provide added military capabilities. In particular, any future deployment of a theater missile defense system—which is currently only under preliminary joint study with the United States—probably would require intense coordination among GSDF missiles,

MSDF Aegis ships, and the ASDF Airborne Warning and Control System (AWACS).

Awakened public opinion in Japan and political reform will inevitably require adjustments in U.S.-Japan security relations. Despite increased economic frictions, however, both countries appear to recognize the long-term mutual benefits of close and continued partnership in the post-Cold War era. In the words of a leading Japanese analyst, Takeshi Kondo:

*From the moment that the Japan-U.S. alliance breaks down, Japan will start having enormous difficulties in its relationship with other Asian countries. Nor will these difficulties be limited to Asia. Japan will also have a hard time in its relationships with Russia and the Middle East*²

From an American perspective, a reinvigorated partnership with a more confident Japan is vital for ensuring regional and global stability. Meanwhile, a Japan active in the international arena can bolster other market democracies on a vast range of traditional as well as less traditional security issues. In sum, the demise of the old U.S.-Japan alliance is giving rise to a new, improved partnership built upon constructive interdependence. **JFQ**

NOTES

¹ For an English translation of this document, see appendix A to Patrick M. Cronin and Michael J. Green, *Redefining the U.S.-Japan Alliance: Tokyo's National Defense Program*, McNair paper 31 (Washington: Institute for National Strategic Studies, National Defense University, November 1994), pp. 21–60.

² Takeshi Kondo, "U.S.-Japan Economic and Security Relations," *Securitarian* [Tokyo], July 1, 1994, p. 14.